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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR ADVISES IECI ON RESULTS ANNOUNCEMENT
TIMELINE AND DEBATHIFICATION

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

1. (C) SUMMARY: In a January 2 meeting with IECI commissioners, the Ambassador encouraged the IECI Board to be careful announcing election results before the international observer group presents its own findings, lest those findings undercut the IECI. Recognizing that the IECI faced its own pressures in announcing results, the Ambassador suggested it present preliminary information after the complaints review, but hold off on final results until after the international observer mission's announcement. The Commissioners agreed with this advice and indicated that they would follow this timeline. The Ambassador also urged IECI Board members to hold off on disqualifying names listed by the Deba'athification Commission until Prime Minister Ja'afari had a chance to review the issue and make a decision as to his involvement. The Commissioners made no commitment but seemed amenable to this request as well. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) On January 2, the Ambassador met with all the IECI Commissioners present in Baghdad. (Chairman Izadin al-Mohammady and Commissioner Farid Ayar are currently out of the country.) During this meeting, the Ambassador praised the Commissioners for their December 28 statement welcoming the arrival of international experts who would continue to monitor the post-election process. Noting that the International Mission for the Iraqi Elections (IMIE) team would arrive by January 3, the Ambassador cautioned the Commissioners that the timing of the election results announcement would be critical to political buy-in. The timing, he said, should take into account the arrival and research timing of IMIE. Although there were several announcement options available to the Commission, the Ambassador said, he recommended the final announcement of results wait until the January 18-20 timeframe to give IMIE time to produce their own statement. As a complement to this approach, the Ambassador suggested announcement of preliminary results in the next week, once the Commissioners had completed their review of the red, serious complaints (somewhere around January 8).

3. (C) The Commissioners were generally receptive to the idea that timing be linked with IMIE's efforts. They recognized the importance that political parties and outside groups were placing on the IMIE results and agreed that appropriate IECI announcement timing would reinforce IECI credibility. Highlighting the importance of a "coordinated front", Commissioner Su'ad al-Jabouri opined that this timeline would work. Commissioner Abdulhussein al-Hindawi indicated acceptance of the Ambassador's suggestion by noting that the suggestion merited the IECI's attention and serious consideration.

4. (C) The Ambassador also recommended that the Commissioners hold off on disqualifying names covered by the Deba'athification Commission. He remarked to the Commissioners that Prime Minister Ja'afari was reviewing this issue and therefore it would be premature to disqualify any names out of hand. Commissioner Safwat Sidqi, a lawyer by training, was initially reluctant to delay IECI action since he believed that the IECI was legally obligated to start disqualifying candidates. However, after further discussion, Sidqi and the other Commissioners acknowledged that the law gave the Prime Minister special jurisdiction to weigh in on Deba'athification issues. Given this clarification, the IECI Commissioners indicated that they would hold off on candidate disqualification for the time being.

5. (C) Comment: We had reviewed these ideas with the UN team here prior to the meeting, and they too are in full agreement with them. End Comment.
KHALILZAD